

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) An isolated bacterial strain deposited with the C.N.C.M. on December 5, 2002, under the number I-2962.

Claims 9-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) An isolated bacterial strain which is an *Exiguobacterium lactigenes* strain

said isolated bacterial strain comprising a 16S rRNA sequence of SEQ ID NO:1,  
said isolated bacterial strain further comprising a DNA sequence, at least part of  
which is capable of hybridizing with genomic or plasmid DNA of the strain deposited on  
December 5, 2002, under the No. I-2962, with the Collection Nationale de Cultures de  
Microorganismes (C.N.C.M.),

said isolated bacterial strain being thermoresistant, saccharolytic and amylolytic  
and/or capable of producing L(+) lactate, and

having growth properties at temperatures of 40 to 50°C, at a pH of 5.4 to 9.15,  
with an optimum for growth at 45°C, at a pH of approximately 7, and  
a guanine plus cytosine content of its DNA of approximately 50 mol%

The bacterial strain as claimed in claim 1, wherein said 16S rRNA sequence is  
SEQ ID NO:1.